

Client and Community Complaints – Guidelines and Procedures

Purpose:

To provide the client and members of the community with an opportunity to identify any aspect of Stonegate CHC with which they are not satisfied.

Rationale:

Staff at the Stonegate Community Health Centre embrace the philosophy of client-centred care and believe that clients have a right and responsibility to be fully informed about and directive in the management of their health. Clear communication mechanisms and pathways must be in place in the event that clients have complaints or comments about the care or service provided at the Centre.

Every complaint will be viewed as:

- An opportunity to do things better.
- A way to reduce any possible risks and/or future potential harm to clients and community members.

Guidelines

- Clients and community members have a right to complain about their experience or any aspect of Stonegate CHC with which they are not satisfied.
- Clients will be informed of the Client Complaint Procedure at the time of intake. It shall also be provided to any person on request, and made available on our website and on posters within the CHC.
- Clients and community members may approach any staff member with a complaint. All staff members will be familiar with our Complaint procedure.
- The responsibility for handling any complaint about a staff performance issue rests with the Manager of that staff person. If a complaint relates to a Manager, the client or community member has a right to complain directly to the Executive Director. If the complaint includes the Executive Director, or, they are unsatisfied with the result, they can escalate their complaint to the Board of Directors.
- Where a complaint has legal implications, the Executive Director shall be informed immediately and report to the Board if appropriate.
- Complainants will be given the names of the relevant Provincial bodies dealing with professional care issues, if they wish to make a formal complaint there some of which include:
 - **Ontario Human Rights Tribunal** - All persons have the right to file a human rights Application directly with the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. The Tribunal normally requires that an Application be filed at any time within twelve (12) months of the alleged Discrimination or Harassment, or the last incident thereof.
 - **The Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario** - All persons have the right to file a complaint with the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario if they think that their personal information has been improperly collected, used, or disclosed by a health sector organization or practitioner, and/or if they requested access to correction of their personal information and their request was denied.

- **College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)** - regulates the practice of medicine in Ontario. Physicians are required to be members to practice medicine in Ontario. The role of CPSO and its authority and powers are set out in the *Regulated Health Professions Act (RHPA)*, the *Health Professions Procedural Code* under the *RHPA* and the *Medicine Act*.

Complaint Procedure

Clients may express complaints to Stonegate CHC through either an informal or formal complaint process. An informal resolution of the complaint is encouraged whenever possible before formal procedures are initiated.

Every attempt will be made to respond to the initial complaint within 5 days. Please note there may be unforeseen circumstances that may impede the initial response time (eg. sector crisis, staff absence).

Informal Complaint Process

- Informal complaints can be expressed in person or by phone – ideally to the most relevant person involved and/or the departmental supervisor. Because many complaints are related to misunderstandings or miscommunication, speedy resolution is usually the result of this conversation.
- Staff receiving a complaint will respond in an open, positive, and professional manner. They will talk with the person to determine what the issue is and what they want done about it. They will then either deal with the complaint or refer to the most relevant person involved for resolution
- In the course of this discussion the staff member should try to inform the complainant of the Stonegate CHC complaint process and offer them an opportunity to speak with the Director of Health Promotion.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the initial response they received from the Stonegate CHC staff, a written complaint outlining the initial complaint as well as the reasons for dissatisfaction with the response may be submitted to the Director Health Promotion by the staff member.
- Whether or not the person wants to pursue the matter any further, they should be informed that the issue will be brought to the attention of management and that they can complete a [Client Feedback Form](#)

Formal Complaint Process

- Clients can contact the centre and ask to speak with the Director Health Promotion, or complete the [Client Feedback Form](#).
- If the complaint is received from a reporting staff member the Director Health Promotion reviews the complaint and speaks with the reporting staff person, and client to clarify the situation as required.
- If the client did not report their complaint to a staff member and completed the Client Feedback Form, the Director Health Promotion will review the complaint and contact the client to discuss their concerns.

- The client submitting a complaint may continue to access Stonegate CHC services during the investigation unless they prefer not to, in which case every effort will be made to refer to an appropriate organization.
- The Director Health Promotion informs the Executive Director (E.D.) of the complaint and any next steps that need to happen. The Director Health Promotion submits the completed client feedback form and a record of any follow-up conducted to the E.D.
- The E.D. reviews the information provided.
- If the complaint requires further action by the E.D., they will follow up with the relevant staff person making the complaint and other parties as necessary.
- The Director Health Promotion will retain all documents related to the client feedback. Complaint trends are reviewed at least every 6 months by the Management Team and annually to the Board of Directors to review trends and outcomes.

Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint within 10 working days.

Complaints against Specialists, Non-CHC providers

- Clients may not like or take issue with a specialist/other provider to which they have been referred. The client can speak to the Stonegate CHC referring provider who will document the complaint/issue in client file and consider whether to refer to that specialist/provider in the future.
- If the client and staff express dissatisfaction with the specialist's/provider's opinion, then a second opinion/referral to other specialists/providers will be made.

Complaints against Other Agencies

- Clients can share their concerns about another agency informally or formally completing the Client Feedback Form.
- Staff receiving complaints from clients about other agencies will note such complaints in the client's file and direct the client back to that agency to follow their complaint process or to discuss and try to resolve the complaint with that agency's appropriate Manager.
- If the client is unable to do so for fear of reprisal, Stonegate CHC staff may advocate on their behalf.

Complaints against Partner Agencies

- Clients can share their concerns about partnering agencies informally speaking to a Stonegate CHC staff member or formally completing the Client Feedback Form.
- Staff receiving complaints from clients about partner agencies delivering services at Stonegate will note such complaints and direct the client to the Stonegate CHC Manager who supervises this partnership. The Stonegate Manager will explore the partner agency's complaint process and assist the client in navigating this process.
- If the client is unable to do so for fear of reprisal, Stonegate CHC staff may advocate on their behalf.
- If the problem is systemic in nature, then the issues should be raised with the Executive Director and followed up between the partners at the executive/management level.

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Next review: August 2027

Reviewed by: Team Leaders

Approved by: Executive Director